



A Mini
FORAGING GUIDE
For Western Washington





Foragers Welcome!

In lush Western Washington state a bounty of wild edibles can be collected year round. Reference this calendar as you head out for your next hike or beach visit to see what berries, mushrooms, greens, or marine life you may be able to collect. This calendar and guide is intended to inspire your foraging adventures in all seasons, but is not meant as a thorough identification guide. Always be certain of what you are collecting and reference guidebooks, field guides, and experts to learn more about what you want to forage. The best way to learn is to be taken out into the field by an experienced forager to better learn about identification and context.



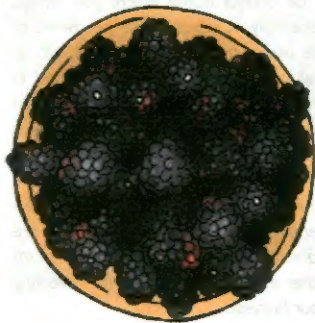


The selection of wild edibles discussed here are generally found West of the Cascades in Washington state, but microclimates small and large greatly impact what species are found where. Because of this some of these species may not be widely found in your area. These microclimates can also impact when some wild edibles are ripe or in season, so the months noted here may not represent your area. However, in general many of these wild edibles can also be found throughout the Northwest. If you plan on foraging in quantity please consider that you may need to purchase a permit to collect in some areas. In some cases there may also be restrictions on when you can collect, as is often the case with shellfish collection.

Please also follow

Foraging Etiquette And Guidelines

- Only eat wild edibles you can certainly identify. If you cannot identify it, you should not eat it! Do your research! Learn from an expert, take a class, and study identification guides thoroughly so that you can safely and reliably identify wild edibles. You should also note how to properly collect various species and what gear you may need, as some need to be harvested using specific techniques or tools (this is often the case with mushrooms species).
- For your own safety only pick healthy looking fruit, plants, or wild edibles. Avoid ones that animals or insects have previously eaten from or ones that look diseased.
- Be respectful of the harvesting sites and rights of Indigenous peoples. These foraged species can be of great cultural importance for Indigenous communities.



• Don't pick a plant or area clean, always leave plenty behind for animals and for the health of the foraged species. Pick here and there, foraging in a dispersed fashion. This is especially important with native plant species, so do not collect more than 5% of the harvest a plant has to offer, or if collecting the whole item do not collect any until you have found 20 in the area (1-in-20 rule). An example: If you are collecting Shaggy Mane Mushrooms and only find 15 mushrooms within an area do not pick any, if you find upwards of 20 you may then harvest 5%. For invasive and non-native plants you may pick all you'd like.

• Be careful about where you forage. Especially in urban areas be aware of the use of pesticides, herbicides, etc. as well as of general pollutants found in urban soils and waters. Do not harvest close to roads (at least 50 feet away is best), railroads, or industrial areas. Use your best judgment and common sense when choosing where you forage! Be gentle with the environment you are harvesting in. Do not trample or harm other species in the hunt for collecting your harvest.



- Be aware of permits, open and closed seasons, and harvest limits that may apply to the foraging of certain species. Look for this information through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.



- Harvesting of marine species requires special care. When collecting seaweed of any variety please note that they can concentrate metals and pollutants. Only collect seaweed from clean beaches with strong tides that keep water circulating. Avoid collecting near densely populated or industrial areas, and make sure that what you collected is fresh and has not been on the beach for an extended period of time. The beaches of Puget Sound would not be ideal for seaweed harvest. If you are collecting shellfish be aware of algae blooms and biotoxins that may affect harvests and shellfish safety. Information on beach closures, algae blooms, and shellfish harvest procedures can be found through the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.



Greens





Stinging Nettle

Harvest: March - April

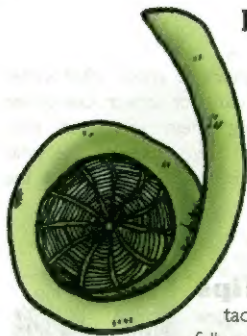
Nettles are one of the first greens to appear after winter and make a very healthy substitute for spinach. Use gloves and scissors when collecting them to avoid their characteristic stings, and then boil them to render the small stinging hairs useless. Nettles are best collected early in the season before the plant blooms.

Fir & Spruce Tips

Harvest: April - June

All conifer tips except for Yew tips are edible, but Fir and Spruce tips are the most commonly collected. The tips should be collected when bright green and soft in the Spring. Conifer tips are most often used to infuse flavor in to tea, cream, or syrup but are also cooked into a variety of dishes.





Fiddlehead Fern

Harvest: April

Many fern varieties produce fiddleheads in the Spring but not all are edible or palatable. Ostrich Fern's are the most reliable and choice of the fiddlehead varieties but can be easily confused with other ferns. It is best to first collect the fiddleheads with someone experienced who can help you differentiate the varieties, and who can show you how to properly pick the fiddleheads so as to best care for the plant. One tactic for locating the ferns is to note the location of fully grown Ostrich Ferns in the summer and then return to those plants in the following Spring to harvest the new fiddleheads. Pick the fiddleheads before they have fully unfurled and are between one and four inches tall. Fiddleheads must be cooked thoroughly before eating and should be eaten in moderation. They have a flavor similar to asparagus or spinach, and are best boiled and then sautéed with butter.





Blackberries

Harvest: July - September

There are several blackberry varieties available throughout the summer months. The large invasive Himalayan Blackberry species can be found in cleared areas in both urban and rural settings and produces a larger fruit. The native Trailing Blackberry species is more subtle as it is low lying and produces smaller fruit. It can be found in cleared areas, shady forests, and near rivers.

Black Gooseberry

Harvest: July - August

Black Gooseberry plants and fruit have no extremely similar look-alikes, making them easier to spot. They are however in the same family as currants, so Black Currants in particular do bare some resemblance. The branches on the Black Gooseberry are spiny and the fruit itself has little hairs, making the plant distinctive.

Gooseberries are great in jellies, pies, and juices.





Cascade Huckleberry

Harvest: Aug - September

Cascade Huckleberry bushes are short, generally no taller than two feet tall. They are found at sub-alpine and alpine elevations in conifer forests. They have small, slightly serrated, oval leaves. The berries are sweet and range in color from blue to black. If they can be collected in quantity they can be used for jams, juices, pies, and more.

Evergreen Huckleberry

Harvest: September - December

Evergreen Huckleberry plants do not need much sun and as such can be found in dense forests. They generally produce fruit around September but the fruit will remain on the bush until as late as December, making

these berries a welcome fruity treat in early winter. The plants tend to be three to six feet tall, though they can be taller, and have serrated leaves like those found with other huckleberry varieties.





Red Huckleberry

Harvest: July - September

Red Huckleberry plants are generally found in forested areas in rich soil or growing from fallen trees. They typically grow at low to medium elevations. Red Huckleberries are great eaten right off the plant or used in a variety of preserves. While Huckleberries are generally pretty distinctive and recognizable for most people there are many red berries that share their environment, so make sure you know what you're picking

Rosehips

Harvest: November

Best harvested after the first frost, which may occur as early as October or as late as December. Rosehips make great syrups and jams and are high in Vitamin C, but you must be careful to removed all the seeds from the hip as the small hairs on the seeds can be a digestive irritant. Rose varieties include the Baldhip Rose, Nootka Rose, and Seaside Rose. Roses can be found from sea level up to 2300 feet near wetlands or streams, as well as in open areas and conifer forests.





Salal Berry

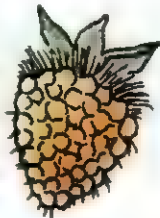
Harvest: July - September

Salal berries should be picked when soft, and the berries can be picked individually or as a group including the soft part of the branch they grown on. The berries have a bit of a starchy, seedy texture so they can be used to make jam, syrup, or fruit leather as alternatives. Salal berries have a very strong aroma but may lack flavor depending on how they're used, and are best used as an aromatic addition to other preserves.

Salmon Berry

Harvest: May - July

Salmonberries can be ripe when they are a variety of colors, including yellow, red, purple, or somewhere inbetween when ripe. Pick them when they are soft and slip off the cone easily. Salmon Berry bushes are generally found in moist to wet places such as near streams at low to medium elevations.





Strawberries

Harvest: May - July

There are several strawberry varieties that can be found in Western Washington, all of which look fairly similar and make great eating. All are very small, much smaller than your average store-bought strawberry. The Coastal Strawberry can be found in June and July in rocky and sandy coastal areas. The Wild Strawberry and Woodland Strawberry are most often found in lower elevations though they can be found higher up, and prefer open areas like meadows, clearings, or roadsides. Wild Strawberries often have a "super strawberry" flavor and are great eating.

Thimbleberry

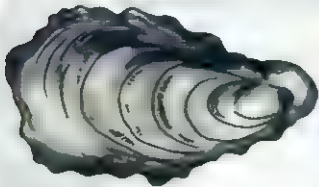
Harvest: July - August

Thimbleberries are easy to spot due to the round, bright berries and the large, soft, maple-like leaves. The name "Thimbleberry" is fitting as the berries will fit perfectly over the tip of your finger. They are rather seedy so if the texture is not appealing they can be made into a good syrup or jam.





Ocean





Pacific Dulse Seaweed

Harvest: Year round (Best in Winter - Spring)

Pacific Dulse seaweed can be found year round on West coast beaches from Alaska down to California. However, Winter and Spring seem to be the best times to collect Dulse due to storms and tides making it more available.

Dulse is most often dried and ground to use as seasoning, and is very nutritious. Make sure the seaweed is fresh and has not been on the beach for an extended period of time.

California Mussel

Harvest: Year Round (Best in Winter - Spring)

The California Mussel can be found on large tidal rocks and pilings up and down the West coast. The shell tends to be a range of blue, black, and brown and is ribbed. They can be anywhere between three and six inches in length. The similar Pacific Blue Mussel is also edible. Both mussel varieties can be collected year round but are best collected in the Winter and Spring when there are more extreme low tides and algae blooms are not a threat.





Pacific Oyster

Harvest: Year round (Best in Winter - Spring)

The Pacific Oyster has a distinctive shell of brown, silver, gray, and sometimes blue or purple with a very rough and layered texture. They have been known to reach over a foot in length but are more often found to be half that size. They grow on hard surfaces or rocks in calm water. As with other shellfish they can be found year round but are best harvested in Winter or Spring.

Pacific Razor Clam

Harvest: Year Round (Best in Winter - Spring)

The Pacific Razor Clam has a brown to golden oblong shell that is generally three to six inches long. This clam is very popular and is the focus of many beach trips in the Puget Sound area. They are found burrowed in the sandy inter-tidal zone of beaches. Like other shellfish in the Puget Sound area Razor Clams can be collected year round but are best collected in the Winter and Spring. Razor Clam harvests are fairly regulated so check for beach openings and closures when going clamming.







Black Trumpet Mushroom

Harvest: October - March

Black Trumpet Mushrooms are actually a species of Chanterelle. The stem lacks the characteristic extended gills of a Chanterelle and is instead nearly smooth. They do however have the familiar funnel shape. Black Trumpets may be confused with the Devil's Urn mushroom, which is not poisonous but is also not choice eating. Due to their color Black Trumpets are hard to spot in the dark, wet areas of hardwood forests where they like to grow in clusters. For this reason they are a rarer mushroom and a special find.

Black Morel Mushroom

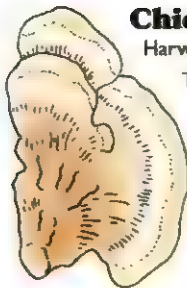
Harvest: April - June

Black Morel Mushrooms are, like many other mushrooms, a category instead of a specific species. They have a dark brown cap with black edges and a whitish-brown hollow stem. Black Morels prefer recently burned forested areas, and if the conditions are right they can be found in large groups. For most people Black Morels are very sought after, but for some people they cause stomach upset or pain.



Chicken of the Woods Fungus

Harvest: December - March

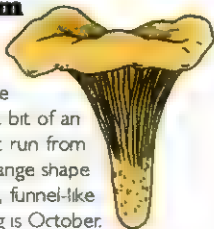


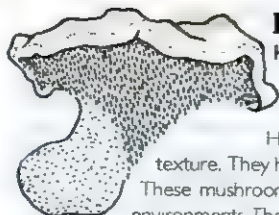
The Chicken of the Woods Fungus aka the Sulfur Shelf Fungus is actually two species grouped under one name. One prefers growing on hardwoods and one prefers conifers. When the fungus is younger the leading edge of the shelf can be harvested while still soft. They have a texture similar to chicken when cooked, but as the fungus grows and ages it will become woody and tough and not good for eating.

Golden Chanterelle Mushroom

Harvest: July - November

Golden Chanterelles are an iconic and highly sought-after mushroom. There are many Chanterelle varieties, and even the term "Golden Chanterelle" is a bit of an umbrella term. Chanterelles have distinctive gills that run from the bottom of the cap down the stem. Their caps change shape over time but the classic silhouette is an upturned, funnel-like shape. Peak time for Chanterelle picking is October.





Hedgehog Mushroom

Harvest: October - February

Hedgehog Mushrooms are a creamy white to orangeish-brown color. On the underside of a Hedgehog mushroom's cap you will find spiny texture. They have been known to have caps six inches across. These mushrooms grow low to the ground and prefer forest environments. There are several species of Hedgehog fungus, all of which are edible and sought after.

King Bolete Mushroom

Harvest: August - November

King Bolete mushrooms and closely related species of Bolete such as Porcini and Steinpilz are all edible. They have a foamy texture on the underside of the cap while the top is a shade of brown, while the large and somewhat tapered stem is usually a mottled white and brown color. King Bolete and its relatives like conifer forests and can grow to be upwards of six inches across.





Lion's Mane Fungus

Harvest: August - November

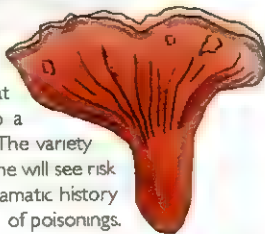
Lion's Mane Fungus has a preference for growing on Oak and Maple trees. These fungi are large and can weigh several pounds. They can gain several pounds of water weight after a good rain and are then not worth picking. They will range in color from white, cream, gold, and brown. However, they should only be eaten when bright white. While Lion's Mane is distinctive it can be confused with the Coral fungus.

Some Coral Fungi are edible, but both fungi varieties should be clearly identified before being collected.

Lobster Mushroom

Harvest: July - October

The Lobster Mushroom is really a parasite that over other mushrooms, converting them into a brightly colored, essentially gill-less mushroom. The variety the host mushroom is not often known and some will see risk in this, but Lobster Mushrooms do not have dramatic history of poisonings.





Oyster Mushroom

Harvest: March - May, September - October

Oyster mushrooms are whitish-brown, grow in a fan shape, and have gills that extend from the cap down the undefined stem. They occur in clusters, always on wood and never on the ground. Oyster Mushrooms have many look a-likes to the untrained eye so expert guidance should be sought out when collecting these mushrooms. The Angel Wings mushroom is the most likely to be confused for the Oyster, and while many eat Angel Wings some deaths have resulted from their consumption in the past so should they should be avoided.

Pine Mushroom

Harvest: August - November

The Pine Mushroom aka the American Matsutake is a highly sought after species. They are white beneath the brown patches that often pattern them. They have fine, dense gills as well. Oddly enough these mushrooms have a strong, spicy smell to them. This smell can help differentiate the Pine Mushroom from look-alikes. This mushroom has a number of dangerous look-alikes so do thorough research before collecting Pine Mushrooms.



Shaggy Mane Mushroom

Harvest: April - June, September - November



Shaggy Mane Mushroom is considered a very good eating mushroom when it is in its prime. It should only be eaten when it is still bright white. As the mushrooms age they will become black and drippy, at which point they are not edible. The Shaggy Mane caps will begin to turn black from the edge of the cap inwards, so if you see any evidence of this do not pick the mushroom. The cap has a somewhat frilly, almost feathery texture that makes it unusual. The stem is fairly tall, smooth, and white. Sometimes there is a ring around the stem if it has not already fallen off by the time the mushroom is found. They are found in relatively open spaces, such as spacious forests, along cleared areas like roads or trails, and are often seen in rural lawns. Shaggy Manes also appear in groups though not very densely packed groups. They will usually pop up after a late summer or early fall rain.





Anna Moore 2019